



Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory

Reply to: *Eric N. Powell*
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Dana Richter
2427 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Dana:

I write this letter for the Delaware Bay Oyster Revitalization Task Force in support of the appropriations request for \$2 million to continue the shell-planting program in Delaware Bay. The proposed project is the single most important activity we can carry out to improve the economics and environment of the Delaware bayshore.

It is not a trivial detail to point out, during a time of serious economic contraction, and a time when the jobless rate along the bayshore has exceeded 10%, the highest level in the state, that the 2009 quota for the New Jersey oyster industry will exceed 85,000 bushels for the third consecutive year, a record not matched since the early 1980s. The shell-planting program has made this possible. No other activity that I am aware of has had such a positive influence on the lives of people of modest means while also promoting environmental benefits of great worth.

The purpose of this program is to enhance oyster recruitment, thereby increasing oyster abundance, sustaining habitat integrity, and providing an expanded resource to support the fishery. In the past four years, we have made substantive improvements in these areas – this program has not just ‘marked time’ for the resource or the industry. The focal area of the bay for this project now has abundances at near-historical highs, the quota has risen to historically significant levels, and the amount of funds coming back into the program from the industry to support the program has approximately doubled. The benefits of this program, however, are nowhere nearly exhausted. All metrics continue to show promising trends that can provide an advantageous base to continue expansion of the bay resource and industry, providing the momentum that has been established through past funding can be continued.

Sincerely,

Eric N. Powell
Director
Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory